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# UMM PCS Program: How It Prepares Students for Life After College

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UMM PCS Program: How It Prepares Students for Life After College

Alicen C. Brooks and Kalyn J. Otto

Research Methods and Design SSC 420

University of Maine at Machias

December 18, 2018

Author Note:

This research was conducted in collaboration with our community partner, Uriah Anderson, Program Coordinator, Psychology & Community Studies Program, University of Maine at Machias, [uriah.anderson@maine.edu](mailto:uriah.anderson@maine.edu)

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### Author Biographies

Alicen Brooks is a senior at the University of Maine at Machias majoring in pre-professional biology with a minor in psychology. She played four years of basketball on the varsity squad at the university and has volunteered at the Washington County Special Olympics. Brooks has worked as a medical scribe in the local hospital and plans to pursue a career in the health field either as a nurse or possibly applying to medical school.

Kalyn Otto is a senior at the University of Maine at Machias. She is majoring in Psychology and Community Studies with a minor in counseling. She will be graduating with her Bachelors' degree in three years succeeding in making Dean's list throughout the semesters. She has experience in the mental health field as she had an internship doing crisis work. Otto also played three years of varsity volleyball for the UMM team, and does community service within her church and local churches. Otto plans to work in the mental health field after graduation and possibly pursue a Master's degree later in life.

### Abstract

Since 2012 there have been two alumni studies done at the University of Maine at Machias, one in 2012 and one in 2014. These studies were done to get feedback about the Psychology and Community Studies program. The previous studies focused on minors and certificates that the program could add that students might be interested in and overall satisfaction with the program. The 2014 study found that alumni are overall satisfied with the program and the skills that they developed to use in the workforce. This study is also an alumni survey that looked to get feedback from alumni about what the program is doing well and what it can improve. This current survey was sent out to 123 alumni that graduated between 2014 and 2018. The category of alumni was broadened this year to include those who graduated with one of the PCS program minors, certificates, or the Elementary Education Community Engagement concentration. The survey was emailed and mailed out to all of the alumni. Some alumni were also reached through the Psychology and Community Studies University of Maine at Machias Facebook page. Of the 123 alumni, 23 responded to the survey. Much like the 2014 survey, the alumni from this survey were overall satisfied with the PCS program and how well it has prepared them for their job. Results from this survey will be used to enhance the things that alumni found helpful and improve the areas that alumni reported could use some improvement.

### **Literature Review**

Psychology programs are one of the most popular undergraduate programs for universities (Sears, Boyce, Boon, Goghari, Irwin, & Boyes, 2017). At the University of Maine at Machias (UMM) Lois-Ann Kuntz (personal correspondence, 2018) reports that the Psychology and Community Studies (PCS) program has one of the highest graduation rates compared to other programs at the college. Many other psychology programs do student and alumni surveys to get feedback on their program, like what former students liked and how the program can be improved. That is the purpose of this study, to get feedback from UMM alumni about the PCS program, what they liked, how it can be improved, how well it prepared them for their job, etc. This study is important because alumni have been in the working world and have had time to reflect back on their education so their opinions and feedback are crucial to making important changes to the psychology program.

Volkwein (2010) gave some valuable information about alumni surveys:

Alumni studies are useful not only to assess institutional effectiveness but also to aid institutional planning and revenue generation. Thus, institutional researchers who seek to maximize the utility of alumni research should develop partnerships that include administrative offices and academic departments alike. Alumni are important sources of information and support, and alumni studies should occupy a prominent place in the institutional research portfolio. (p. 137)

The advice was taken from this book and good connections were made with the community partner and with individuals in Powers Hall on campus in order to get the surveys out effectively.

There have been multiple research projects like this at the University of Maine at Machias (UMM) in the past. The PCS program professors and staff like to conduct an alumni survey every few years to see how students feel the program is doing. They do this because they want to be supportive of the alumni work environment and get an idea of how new additions to the program are going and whether or not the students like them.

In 2014, Albee, Grant, Knowles, and Rodriguez, a group of students at UMM, conducted a research project for the PCS program that generated a survey to send out to alumni, obtained the alumni addresses, and sent the surveys out with updated information about the program. Initially, there were 144 surveys sent out, but due to people moving, fourteen were sent back, and only 38 people responded. This is a 29.2% rate of response which is considered a great outcome. According to their research, they found that, on average, alumni thought that the program was successful in preparing them for work after college and that everybody who responded would recommend the program to those interest in studying psychology (Albee, et al. 2014, p.5).

Another study done by Landrum, DePaul, and Wilner (2010) also supports that most psychology students do well going out into the world and using their degrees whether that is going on to graduate school or jumping right into the workforce. Their study also looks at how teachers can improve their classes and the way they teach their psychology students. The data supports encouraging internships and involvement in activities, which UMM already does. They also support that teachers should be making little adjustments to their classes to get students ready for the workforce like encouraging active listening in class, etc. A different supporting study (Johnson, Yukselturk, & Top, 2014) indicated that “the majority of alumni still wanted to see an increased emphasis on teaching, interaction with other students, support, and assessment

feedback focus of the program.” These are all points that will be searched for while reviewing responses to the survey for this project.

Another group of UMM students from 2012 did a similar alumni study. Phillips, Watermolen, and Withers constructed a survey that consisted mostly open ended questions asking alumni what they would like to add to the PCS program. They got a lot of feedback about minors and certificates that they would like to see or about ones that they already thought were good for the program. Since then there have been some additions to the program. The 2012 study specifically asked alumni if the following minors and certificates would be beneficial: social welfare and justice minor, regional ethnography minor, disabilities studies minor, health education certificate, and community leadership certificate. There are some questions in our current study that will address and follow up about some of the minors and certificates that were questioned in the previous 2012 study.

In 2015, Dumford and Miller questioned how alumni answered surveys about the strengths and weaknesses of their undergrad programs. The full question was as follows:

What are the implications of interpreting alumni reports as unbiased assessments of strengths weakness of a program? Conversely, do alumni evaluate their institutions with ‘rose-colored glasses’ and cast things in a positive light, or do they evaluate their education more harshly once they gain a more practical knowledge of the working world? (Dumford, et al., 2015, p. 3)

To address this question and others they asked, they used an online annual survey of arts graduates called the Strategic National Arts Alumni Projects (SNAAP) and another annual online survey for first-year and seniors called the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). They used these surveys to compare the answers and find differences in the levels of

satisfactions between the graduates and the students. As a result, the researchers found that the alumni tended to give higher appraisals to their educational experiences than the seniors who took the surveys did. However, the alumni gave lower specific appraisals for certain aspects, such as persuasive speaking, networking, research skills, and clear writing, than the seniors did. This could be due to the fact that alumni have to think back about their time spent in school, whereas current seniors can just reflect about their current situations. Alternatively, once alumni are in careers their perspective may change about the value of their educational experience from when they were a senior.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Initially, there were 123 people that the survey was sent to via email. Multiple emails initially bounced back, however, the survey was able to be delivered to all 123 alumni through different emails or linkedin accounts. Twenty-three out of the possible 123 alumni who graduated between the years 2014 and 2018 responded to the survey. The overall rate of responses was just about 19 percent. All 23 participants answered yes to the fact that they are 18 or older and that they consented to participating. Out of the responses that were gathered, two alumni graduated in 2014, four in 2015, seven in 2016, four in 2017, and five in 2018. There was also one person who responded to the survey that said they graduated in 2012 even though the survey was only sent to graduates from 2014 to 2018. There were seventeen females, five males, and one genderfluid people that responded to the online survey.

The electronic survey was open for 19 days. It was open from November 16th until December 4th. On November 28th, the link to the survey was posted on Facebook in an attempt to remind people to complete it and to thank those who had already done so. After it was closed



on December 4th because of time constraints, the survey was printed out and sent via USPS to each of the alumni in hopes of gaining more responses. The recruitment emails and facebook request can be found in Appendix A.

The participants' ages ranged anywhere from 22 to 57, as shown in Figure 1 and the majority of the participants were from Maine, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1:

### How old are you?

23 responses

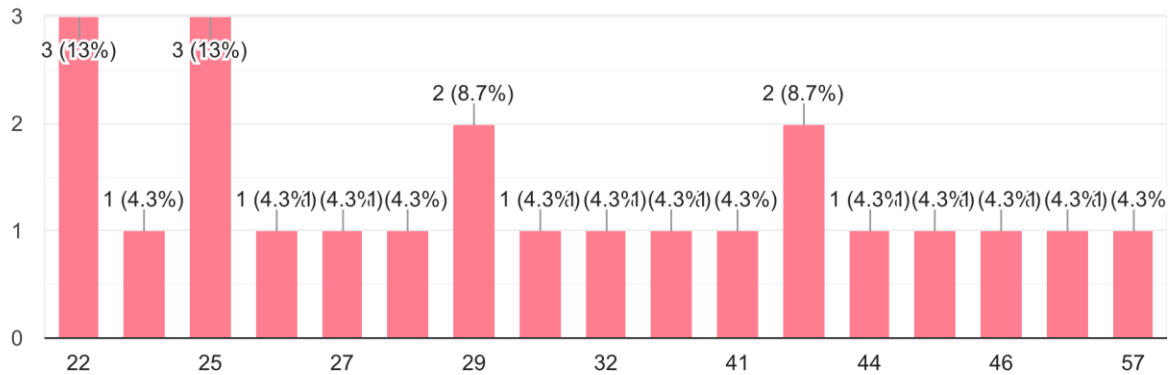
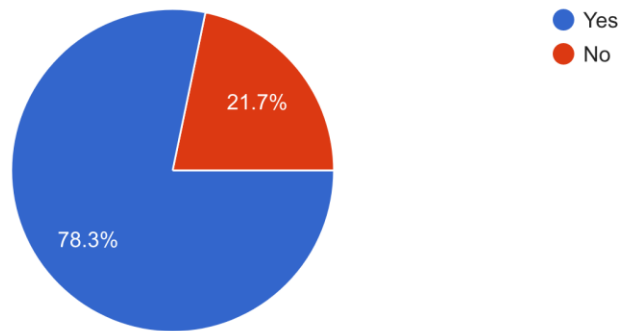


Figure 2:

### Are you from Maine?

23 responses



## Materials

Electronic surveys were emailed to participants. The emails that contained the surveys included an initial email which explained to the participants what the survey was for and why it was being conducted with a link to the survey. After the participants completed the survey, another email was sent out to everyone, thanking those who already completed the survey for their participation and reminding others about it. After the online survey was closed, paper surveys were sent to all the participants to see if more responses could be gathered.

The survey was made up of eight sections comprised of 38 questions. The different sections were the “consent”, “a little bit about yourself”, “your time at UMM”, “life after UMM”, “effectiveness of the PCS program preparation”, “PCS Program”, “where you are now”, and “advice/recommendations”. There were a couple questions in the survey that if answered a specific way would skip the participant to the next section they needed to complete. That way, they didn’t have to answer questions that were unnecessary based on their previous answers. The survey was expected to take 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

## Procedure

An unbiased survey which contained 38 questions related to alumni satisfaction was formulated by a research group for the Psychology and Community Studies Program review at the University of Maine at Machias. The survey was designed specifically for alumni from the years 2014 to 2018 who achieved a bachelor's degree in psychology and community studies, an associate's degree psychology concentration, an associate's degree in counseling (MHR) concentration, a counseling minor, a substance abuse services minor, a cultural anthropology minor, a psychology minor, an elementary education community engaged concentration, or a mental health and rehabilitation technician/counseling certificate. The timeline of 2014-2018 was selected as the last alumni survey stopped with alumni at 2013. Skip logic was used on certain questions in the survey, so that people would not have to answer questions that did not pertain to them, based on other answers that they provided. The survey is included in Appendix B. The survey went through several reviews by various people (faculty and other students) before sending it to the IRB. The IRB gave suggestions on how questions should be phrased and other edits that should be made. Once it was approved by the IRB and the community advisor approved it, the survey was edited one last time and was then sent out via email to all of the alumni between the specified dates. These were sent out through an unbiased staff member to keep it anonymous. Dates of data collection were November 16th until December 4th and a hard copy was sent to all 123 alumni to increase the responses for the PCS program.

### **Results**

Once all of the information was gathered from the survey, excel was used to look at all of the information that was gathered through the questions. This was used to help look for common responses to open ended responses. The responses to all of the open ended questions can be found in Appendix C.

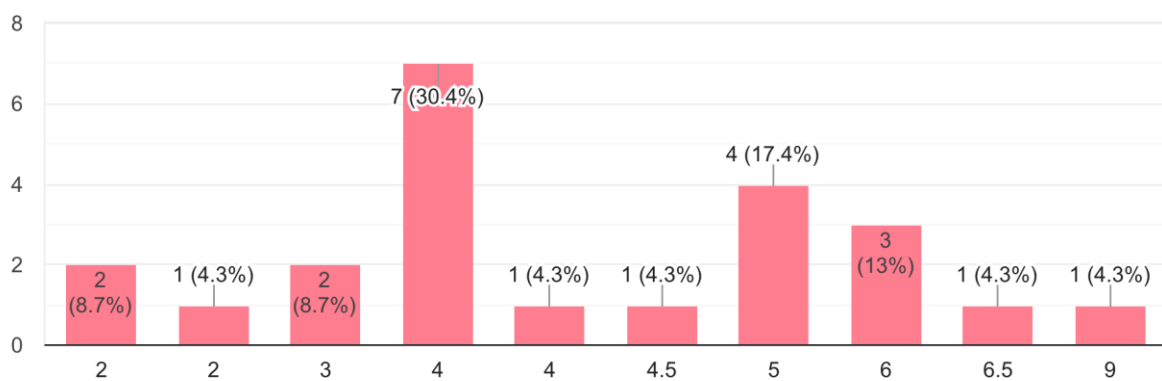
### *A Little Bit About Yourself*

Participants attended UMM anywhere from two years to nine years. The majority of the participants were at UMM for four years for 30.4% of the participants as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3:

#### How many years did you attend UMM?

23 responses



### *Your Time at UMM*

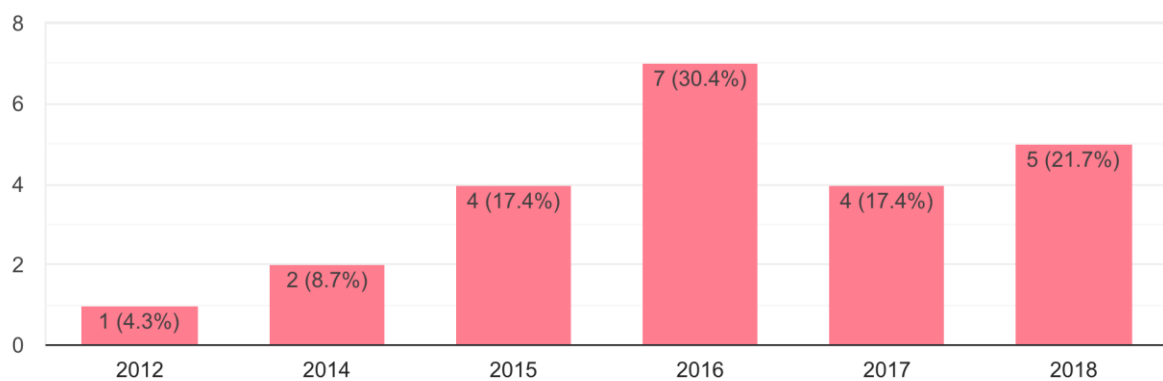
Of the participants, 91.3% said they started off at UMM trying to complete a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and Community Studies. The next top two PCS courses that participants started in with 34.8% and 21.7% were a minor in counseling and mental health rehabilitation technician. As for what participants completed, 100% of the participants completed a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and Community Studies. So despite reaching out to other students (those with only the minor, a certificate, an Associates' with psychology or mental health concentration or Elementary Education with a concentration in community engagement, respondents were still those who graduated with a Bachelor's in Psychology & Community Studies. Of the participants, 43.5% completed a minor in counseling, 21.7% completed mental health

rehabilitation technician, and 17.4% completed a substance abuse services counseling minor. The majority of the participants completed their time at UMM in 2016. This was seven participants at 30.4%, see Figure 4.

Figure 4:

What year did you graduate/complete your certificate from UMM?

23 responses

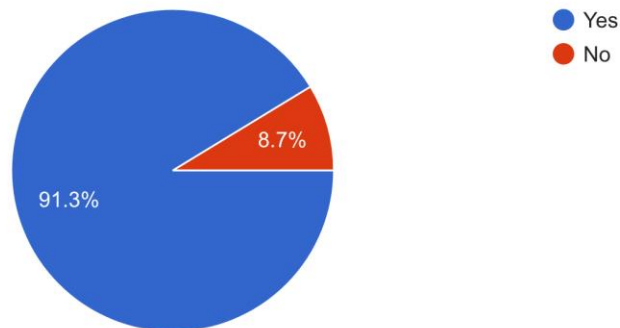


The majority of the participants also completed an internship during their time at UMM as Figure 5 shows. This is important because there was a lot of feedback from the last survey in 2014 that PCS students should have to complete an internship.

Figure 5:

### Did you participate in an internship while at UMM?

23 responses



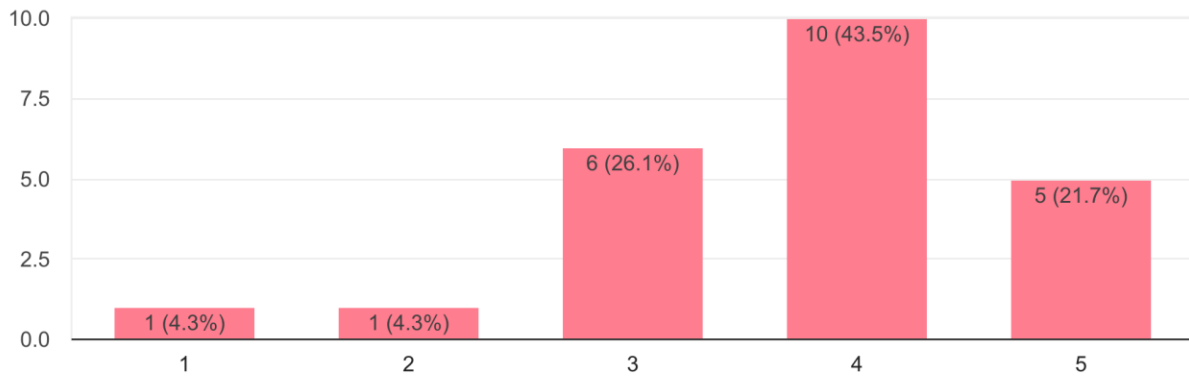
Of the participants, 91.3% said they participated in an internship. Those who did not complete an internship may have been granted credit for prior learning based on experience. The majority of the participants that responded to the internship questions said it was a good experience to get to know the field and populations that the field works with. Two participants said the internship was a good experience, but you will get out of it what you put into it. The only thing that a few participants said the program could work on for the internships was to have better and earlier communication with advisors, internship supervisors, and community partners.

Of the participants, 91.3% said they worked with a community partner three to five times while at UMM shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6:

On the scale below, please rate how often you worked with community partners during the classes you took at UMM.

23 responses



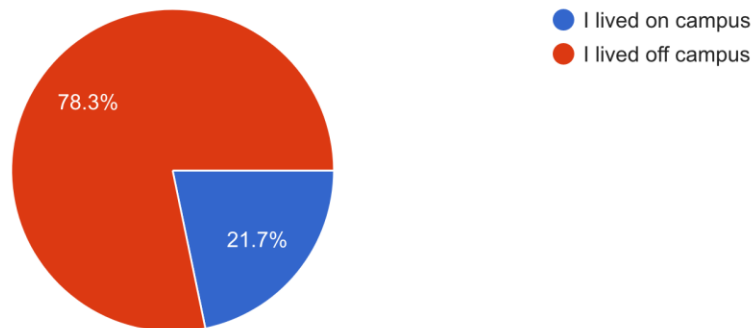
Twenty-one participants responded to the first open-ended question about community partners that said, “What did you think about working with community partners?”. All of the twenty-one participants reported that working with community partners was a good experience. Multiple participants felt that it a good opportunity to learn communication skills and make connections within the field in Washington County. In the second community partners question that asked what feedback would be helpful to the program regarding community partners, most of the participants restated that working with community partners is a very valuable experience and that the program should keep that aspect of the program.

Of the participants, 78.3% lived off campus as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7:

### When you were a student, did you live on-campus or off-campus?

23 responses

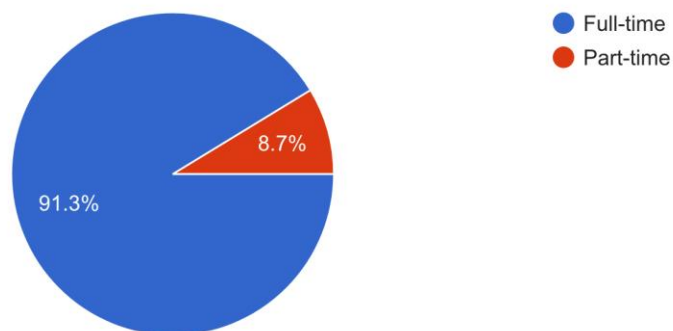


Of the participants, 91.3% were full-time students as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8:

### When you were a student, were you full-time or part-time?

23 responses



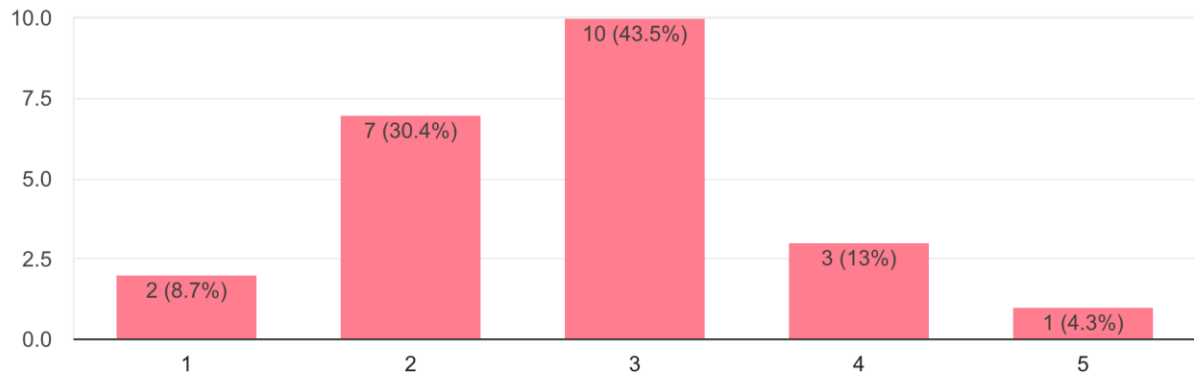
With number one on the x-axis being completely on-campus and five being completely online, the majority of the participants ranked that they took about half on-campus and half online classes as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9:



### When you were a student what method did you take your classes?

23 responses



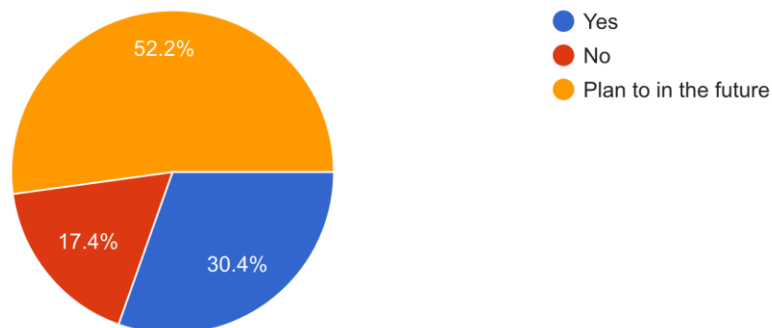
### *Life After UMM*

This current study found that 30.4% of the participants are currently going to graduate school, and 52.2% plan to some time in the future as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10:

### Have you or are you attending graduate school?

23 responses



Out of the twelve responses from the people that are currently in graduate school or are planning to go, three said they were going for counseling and three said they were going for social work.

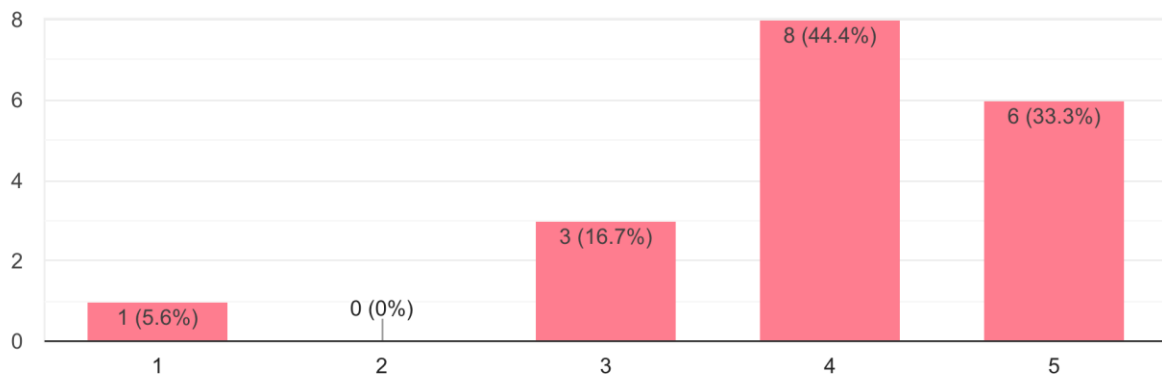
### *Effectiveness of the PCS Program Preparation*

With one being not effective at all and five being extremely effective, 77.7% of the participants rated the program at either a four or five as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11:

Please rate the program on how effectively you have been prepared for applying to graduate school:

18 responses

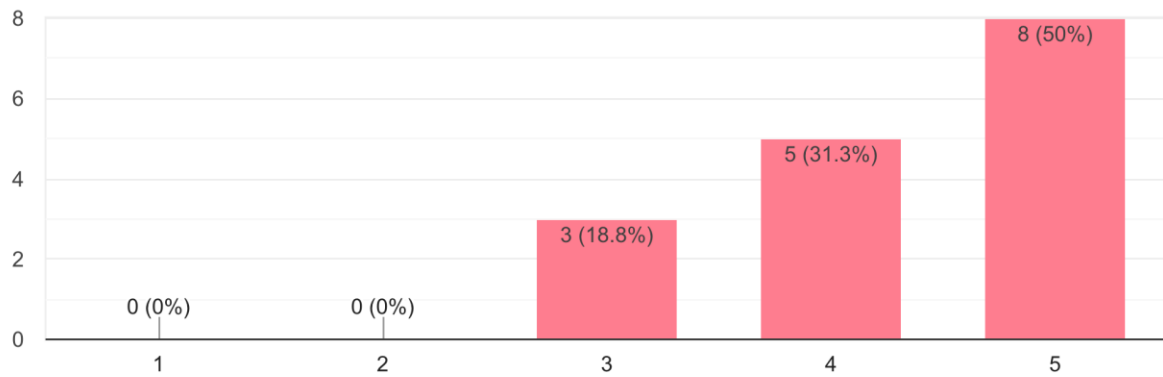


With one being not effective at all and five being extremely effective, 77.7% of the participants rated the program at either a four or five that the PCS program was effective in preparing them for graduate level courses as shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12:

Please rate the program on how effectively you have been prepared for taking graduate level courses:

16 responses



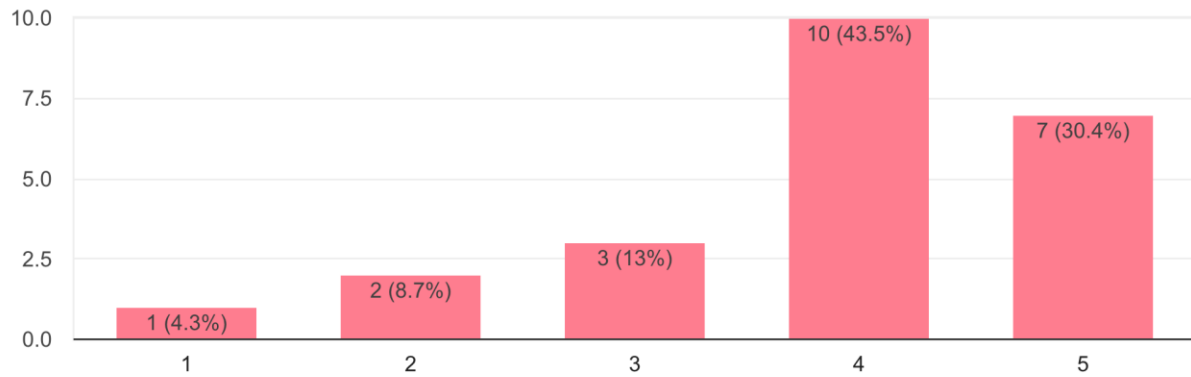
### *PCS Program*

With one being not at all effective and five being extremely effective, 73.9% rated the PCS program at a four or five on how effective the PCS program prepared them for finding employment as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13:

### How effectively did the PCS program prepare you for finding employment:

23 responses

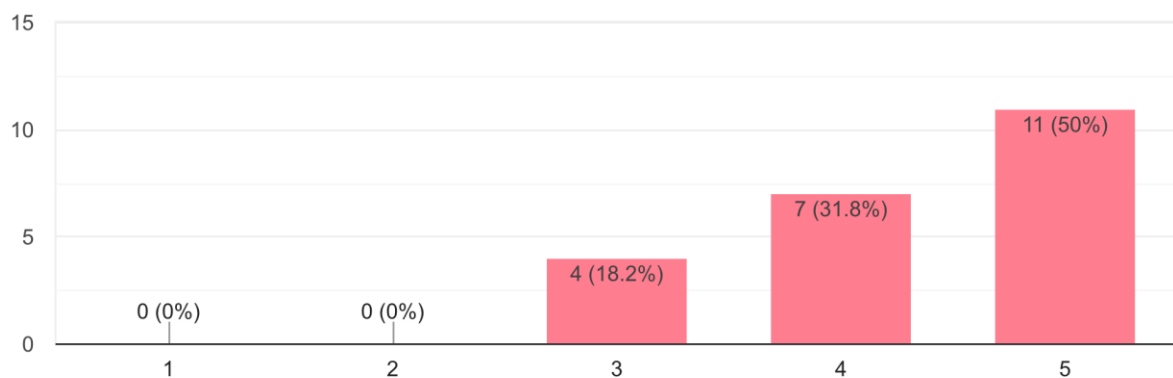


With one being not at all effective and five being extremely effective, 81.8% of the participants rated the PCS program at a four or five for how effectively participants felt prepared for communicating in the workplace as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14:

### Please rate the program on how effectively you have been prepared for communicating in the work place:

22 responses

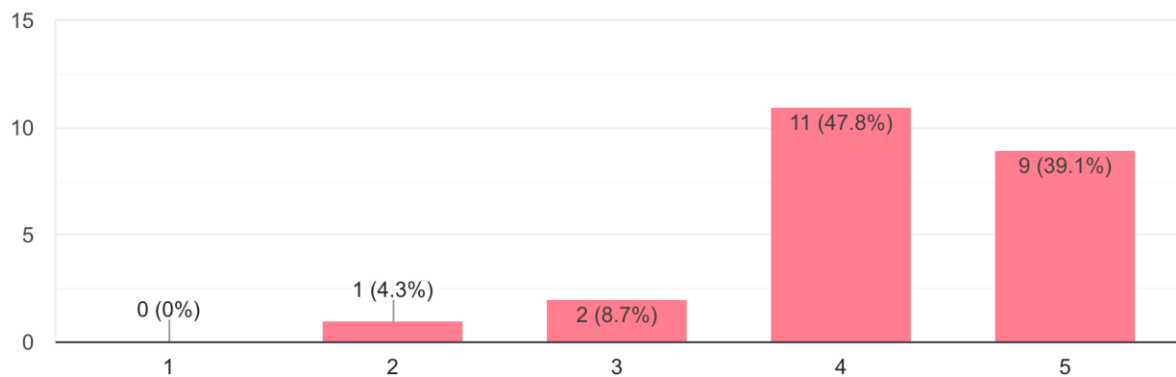


With one being not at all effective and five being extremely effective, 20 of the 23 participants rated a 4 or 5 in how effectively they felt they were prepared for working at their current job as shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15:

Please rate the program on how effectively you have been prepared generally for working at your job:

23 responses



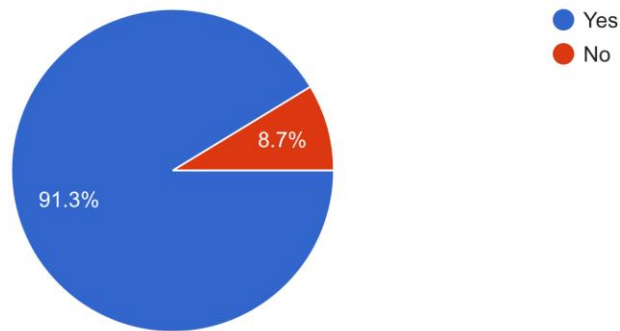
### *Where You Are Now*

Of the participants, 91.3% reported they stayed in Maine after they graduated as shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16:

### Did you stay in Maine after you graduated?

23 responses

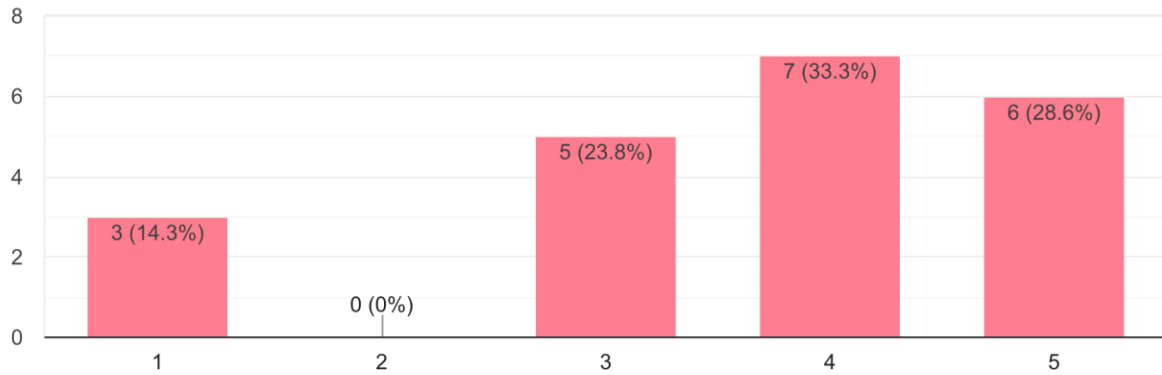


Sixteen out of the twenty-one that answered the question about whether they are currently employed said they work a full-time job. Thirteen out of twenty-one participants that answered where they currently work reported that they work in the mental health field. With one being not at all helpful and five being extremely helpful, 61.9% of the participants reported a four or five for how helpful the PCS courses were for the participants getting their current job as shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17:

### Did your PCS courses help you get your current job?

21 responses



Nine out of the sixteen participants that answered what skills they felt they developed from the program talked about good communication skills that they acquired. Other feedback included positive reports specifically about Introduction to Counseling, Case Manager Skills, and Research Methods and Design. This feedback is important so the program can pinpoint what classes are the most influential for students and which ones to grow on.

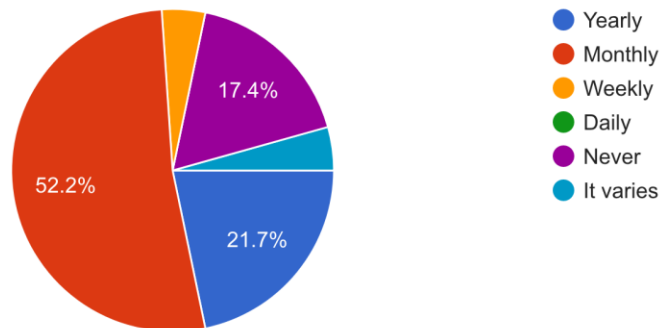
**Lifelong Learning.** The PCS program was interested in whether graduates continue in their life-long learning as this is one of the program outcomes. Four questions that relate to life-long learning were selected from the national Social Capital Benchmark Survey that was piloted in Washington County previously (Davis, Kurz, Wood, Kilton, & Kilton, 2007). The Social Capital Benchmark Survey was conducted in many states in 2000 and 2006.

About half of the participants reported that they volunteer in their communities monthly as shown in Figure 18.

Figure 18:

### On average how frequently do you volunteer in your community?

23 responses

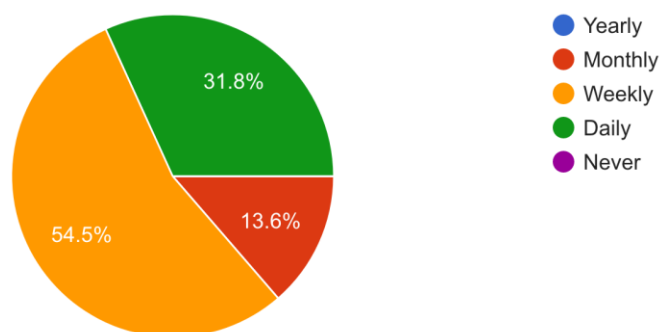


About half of the participants also reported that they research topics online weekly as shown in Figure 19.

Figure 19:

### On average how frequently do you research topics online?

22 responses



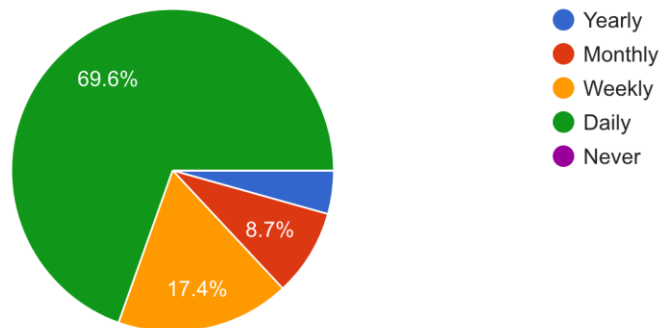
Of the participants, 69.6% reported that they continue learning about their profession daily as shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20:



On average how frequently do you continue learning about your profession?

23 responses

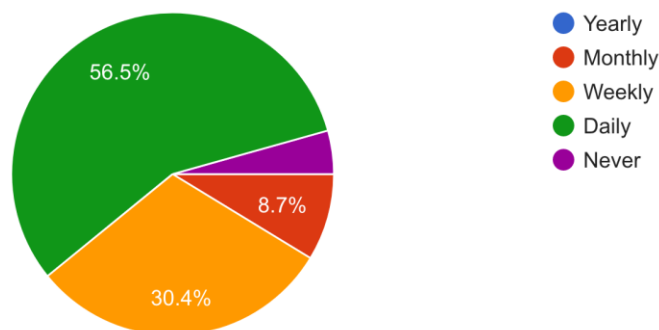


Of the participants, 56.5% reported that they keep up with current events daily as shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21:

On average how frequently do you keep up with current events?

23 responses



### *Advice/Recommendations*

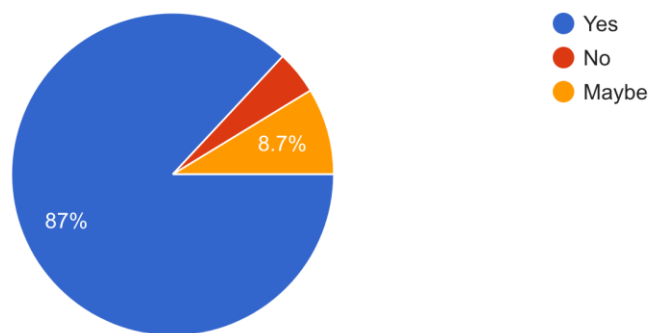
Participants answered what advice they would give to themselves if they could go back in time when they were a student. Some of the responses said they would have liked to have put themselves out there more, asked more questions, be a better students, and soak up as much

information as they could. Of the participants, 87% said they would recommend the PCS program to someone interested in their field of work because all of the knowledge and skills they learned from the PCS courses were very valuable to the jobs that they are doing today as shown in Figure 22. There was only one response that did not recommend the PCS program, and that person said, “UMaine Augusta has more variety in classes, too much favoritism with professors toward individual students, inexperience and unprofessionalism with professors, inability to engage in a professional manner and teach to the non traditional student.”

Figure 22:

Would you recommend the PCS courses to someone interested in your field of work?

23 responses



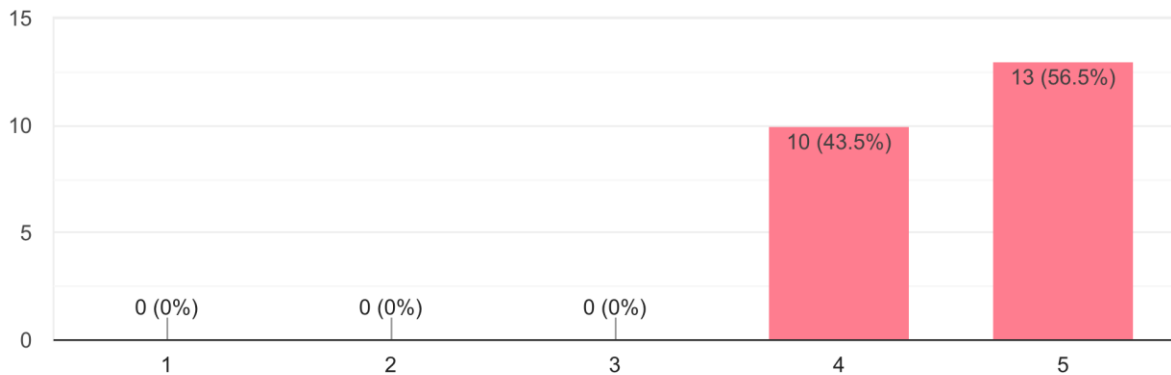
There were seventeen responses for how we can improve the PCS program. Some of the responses included the following: more flexibility with online classes, talking more about career options after graduation, attention to the labor market, using more clinical writing, using more empirically data, stressing APA formatting, and offering more internships.

Of the participants, 100% rated a four or five with a scale of one to five with one being not satisfied and five being very satisfied on how satisfied they were with their education from UMM as shown in Figure 23.

Figure 23:

On the scale below, please rate how satisfied you are with your education

23 responses



For any other suggestions only a few responded. However, out of those few, participants said to keep up the good work and that the PCS program influenced their life in very positive ways and that it was a great experience.

### Discussion

The purpose of this was to gather feedback from the alumni between the years 2014 and 2018 about what they liked about the PCS program and what they would suggest to improve the program. Since the last survey in 2014 covered alumni through the year 2013, this research project focused on the alumni from 2014 to 2018. The last survey done in 2014 stated that their participants reported having felt prepared for graduate school, applying for graduate school, finding employment, and working at their current jobs because of their classes and experience at UMM. For this current study all of the questions that asked participants to rate the PCS program on how well they were prepared for finding employment, communicating in the workplace, and being prepared for work were all rated very high on the one to five scale.

Overall there was very good feedback concerning the internships that participants were a part of, and there was very good feedback about working with community partners. The majority of the participants felt that their internships and work with community partners was very valuable, and the PCS program should continue doing work with internships and community partners.

Having the majority of the feedback being positive feedback brings the results back to the study done by Dumford and Miller (2015). This study talked about how alumni may give feedback about programs with “rose-colored glasses” because they have been out of the program for a little bit. This may be the case here because the alumni are rating the program as a whole and may not be able to remember specifics of their time in the PCS program here at UMM. Additionally, there were people who mentioned how much they enjoyed the research methods class, which could have something to do with the fact that this survey is coming from that class. This could bring them back to that class specifically, making it fresh in their minds, making it easier for them to give feedback about that specific course compared to other courses in the program.

As stated in the results, 52.2% of the participants plan on going to graduate school in the future, and 30.4% are currently working on a graduate degree. The majority of these participants reported that they are pursuing their graduate degree in mental health majors. Three of these participants are working towards a Master’s in counseling, and three more of the participants are working towards a Master’s in social work.

Common suggestions from the participants from throughout the survey include more work with empirical articles and APA style writing. A lot of the participants also suggested that

they wished they could have gotten a better understanding of career choices and career options from the program.

Compared to the Albee et al. study from 2014, there was a similar trend in this current study of participants that were going to graduate school for counseling and social work. Participants from both of these studies also reported similar strengths and skills that they had learned from the program like communication skills and active listening. Both studies also reported high favorability for the following classes: introduction to counseling, COE (internship), and research methods and design. One big difference from this current study from the 2014 study was that in the 2014 study all of the participants reported that they would recommend the PCS program to other people. In this current study, one participant said they would not recommend the program, and two said they would maybe recommend the program. When the current study asked participants to explain why they would or would not recommend, the most negative feedback that was given was that some students get favored by professors and that other universities offer more classes. Other than that, the participants were not very vocal about why they would not recommend the program. Both this current study and the 2014 study had positive reports about internships. From the 2014 study, participants said they would like more options for internships, and that concern was restated in this current study. More of a focus on career planning was also mentioned from participants on both studies. Participants from this current study said they would like more support from professors and supervisors, and they would have liked to have more interaction with clients. This supports the study done by Johnson, Yukselturk, and Top (2014) where they said, “the majority of alumni still wanted to see an increased emphasis on teaching, interaction with other students, support, and assessment feedback focus of the program.”

This study had its share of limitations. Some limitations include the following: participant email addresses on file not being current, not having the time to send out paper surveys in enough time to get the results, possible unclear survey question, and not a lot of people responding to the survey.

This research study was conducted by students of the Research Methods and Design class of Fall 2018 at the University of Maine at Machias. This study provided helpful feedback about the PCS program including things that are going well for the program and things that can be improved. Volkwein (2010) stated, “Alumni studies are useful not only to assess institutional effectiveness but also to aid institutional planning and revenue generation,” and this is why feedback from alumni and this study are so valuable. A special thank you to the following people that made this study possible: Lois Ann Kuntz, Uriah Anderson, Julie Millay, UMM’s Registrar Office, and the IRB Panel (Meghan Duff, Uriah, Lois Ann).

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## Appendix A

## Recruitment Materials

Initial email:

Dear Alumni,

Students in the Psychology and Community Studies program taking Research Methods and Design at the University of Maine at Machias are conducting a survey to gather feedback from you to see what is going well and what needs to be changed about the PCS program to make it better for future students. This survey is being distributed to former students with certificates, minors, elementary ed community-engaged concentrations, Bachelor's degrees, and/or Associate degrees with significant course content from the PCS program.

We would greatly appreciate you taking the time to be part of this confidential survey and we value your input. If the link above doesn't work, please copy this site to your browser:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScwA4BZJ3RO1VE2aTDe2apoCo2viyVaNcx-8jKGaLRejKD6lw/viewform>

Thank you again for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Uriah Anderson

Follow-up email:

Hello again Alumni!

Thank you to the participants who have already completed this survey! We appreciate your input tremendously! As stated in our previous email, we are hoping you will help us improve the Psychology and Community Studies program by taking this survey that we have created.

The Psychology and Community Studies program is being evaluated and reviewed, and your experiences and suggestions will be incorporated into future changes to improve the program and are greatly appreciated. This survey should take no longer than fifteen minutes, and your answers will remain anonymous. We really hope that you will take time to complete this survey in order to not only give feedback, but to make the PCS program better for future students at UMM! We're working with senior students in the Research Methods and Designs class who designed the survey and will summarize the results.

To complete the survey, please copy and paste this web address into your browser:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1bbtmRW8lMKfbIM6n5daw77zBHdT33lZylbhuAQ3oz5E/edit>

Sincerely,

Facebook message:

Hello everyone,

Students in the Psychology and Community Studies program taking Research Methods and Design at the University of Maine at Machias are conducting a survey to gather feedback from former graduates to see what is going well and what needs to be changed about the PCS program to make it better for future students. This survey has been distributed to former students who graduated 2014-2018 with certificates, minors, elementary ed community-engaged concentrations, Bachelor's degrees, and/or Associate degrees with significant course content from the PCS program. This survey should take no longer than fifteen minutes, and your answers will remain anonymous. If you graduated anywhere from 2014-2018 in the PCS program, we really hope that you will take time to complete this survey. Thank you to the participants who have already completed the survey! We appreciate your input tremendously!

To complete the survey, please copy and paste this web address into your browser:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1bbtmRW8lMKfbIM6n5daw77zBHzT33lZylbhuAQ3oz5E/edit>

## Appendix B

## UMM Psychology and Community Studies (PCS) Alumni Satisfaction Survey

(Section 1 of 8)

Hello! We are students in the Psychology and Community Studies program taking Research Methods and Design at the University of Maine at Machias. The purpose of this survey is to gather feedback from alumni to see what is going well and what needs to be change about the PCS program to make it better for future students.

The survey should take you 10-15 minutes to complete. This survey is being distributed to former students with certificates, minors, elementary education community-engaged concentrations, Bachelor's degrees, and/or Associate degrees with significant course content from the PCS program. All the information that we are collecting from you is confidential. The survey will be available through November 30th, 2018. We appreciate you taking the time to be part of this survey, and we value your input. Thank you!

\* Required

1. By clicking yes, you consent to taking this survey and acknowledge that you are 18 or older. By clicking no, you are saying you do not consent to taking this survey and/or are younger than 18. \*

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No (If no, please click "NEXT" and then "Submit" so that we know the survey was seen.)

(Section 2 of 8) A Little Bit About Yourself

2. How do you identify?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Other:

3. How old are you?

4. How many years did you attend UMM?

5. Are you from Maine?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

(Section 3 of 8) Your Time at UMM

6. What did you start off studying while at UMM? Please check all that apply.

Check all that apply.

☐ Bachelor's Degree in Psychology & Community Studies

☐ Associate's Degree Psychology Concentration

☐ Associate's Degree Counseling (MHR) Concentration

☐ Counseling Minor

☐ Substance Abuse Services Minor

☐ Cultural Anthropology Minor

☐ Psychology Minor

☐ Elementary Education Community Engaged Concentration

☐Mental Health & Rehabilitation Technician/Counseling Certificate

7. What did you complete while at UMM? Please check all that apply.

Check all that apply.

☐Bachelor's Degree in Psychology & Community Studies

☐Associate's Degree Psychology Concentration

☐Associate's Degree Counseling (MHR) Concentration

☐Counseling Minor

☐Substance Abuse Services Minor

☐Cultural Anthropology Minor

☐Psychology Minor

☐Elementary Education Community Engaged Concentration

☐Mental Health & Rehabilitation Technician/Counseling Certificate

8. What year did you graduate/complete your certificate from UMM?

9. Did you participate in an internship while at UMM?

Mark only one oval.

☐Yes

☐No

10. If yes, what feedback do you have about the internship that would be helpful to the program?

11. On the scale below, please rate how often you worked with community partners during the

classes you took at UMM.

Mark only one oval.

Seldom      1      2      3      4      5      Often

☐      ☐      ☐      ☐      ☐

12. What did you think about working with community partners?

13. What feedback do you have about working with community partners that would be helpful to the program?

14. When you were a student, did you live on-campus or off-campus?

Mark only one oval.

☐ lived on campus

☐ lived off campus

15. When you were a student, were you full-time or part-time?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Full-time

☐ Part-time

16. When you were a student what method did you take your classes?

Mark only one oval.

Completely On-campus	1	2	3	4	5	Completely Online
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

(Section 4 of 8) Life After UMM

17. Have you or are you attending graduate school?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No After the last question in this section, skip to question 21.

☐ Plan to in the future

18. If yes, what is/was your program of study?

(Section 5 of 8) Effectiveness of the PCS Program Preparation

19. Please rate the program on how effectively you have been prepared for applying to graduate School:

Mark only one oval.

Not at all Effective	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely Effective
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

20. Please rate the program on how effectively you have been prepared for taking graduate level Courses:

Mark only one oval.

Not at all Effective	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely Effective
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

(Section 6 of 8) PCS Program

21. How effectively did the PCS program prepare you for finding employment:

Mark only one oval.

Not at all Effective	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely Effective
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

22. Please rate the program on how effectively you have been prepared for communicating in the work place:

Mark only one oval.

Not at all Effective	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely Effective
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

23. Please rate the program on how effectively you have been prepared generally for working at



your job:

Mark only one oval.

Not at all Effective	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely Effective
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

(Section 7 of 8) Where You Are Now

24. Did you stay in Maine after you graduated?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

25. Are you currently employed?

Check all that apply.

☐ Full-time

☐ Part-time

☐ Multiple part-time jobs

☐ Caring for dependent (elderly, children etc.)

26. What field do you currently work in?

27. Did your PCS courses help you get your current job?

Mark only one oval.

Not at all helpful	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely helpful
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

28. What skills do you feel you developed from the program that have been beneficial to your life/job?

29. On average how frequently do you volunteer in your community?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yearly

☐ Monthly

☐ Weekly

☐ Daily

☐ Never

☐ Other:

30. On average how frequently do you research topics online?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yearly

☐ Monthly

☐ Weekly

☐ Daily

☐ Never

☐ Other:

31. On average how frequently do you continue learning about your profession?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yearly

☐ Monthly

☐ Weekly

☐ Daily

☐Never

☐Other:

32. On average how frequently do you keep up with current events?

Mark only one oval.

☐Yearly

☐Monthly

☐Weekly

☐Daily

☐Never

☐Other:

(Section 8 of 8) Advice/Recommendations

33. If you could go back in time, knowing what you know now, what advice would you give to yourself as a student?

34. Would you recommend the PCS courses to someone interested in your field of work?

Mark only one oval.

☐Yes

☐No

☐Maybe

35. Please explain.

36. Taking into consideration how you've used your degree after graduation, how do you think we can improve the PCS program/courses?

37. On the scale below, please rate how satisfied you are with your education

Mark only one oval.

Not Satisfied   1       2       3       4       5       Very Satisfied

☐      ☐      ☐      ☐      ☐

38. Do you have any other comments/suggestions for us?

## Appendix C

### Open-Ended Question Responses

**If people said that they participated in an internship these are all the comments they gave about it.**

Better communication with the internship hosts.

The only feedback I have is stressing how important internships are for future employment and maybe starting that process earlier and having better communication with the community partner offering the internship.

Find one that challenges you

The internship allowed me to experience working with a population that I was unfamiliar with.

The course load was also not too intensive which allowed for a better learning experience within the capacity of my placement.

I created the content, worked, and traveled throughout Washington County.

At my internship I got out of it what I put into it.

My process was smooth, but I had something in mind and the process was lovely.

More instructor participation

Structured internships from places that are used to interns are better! But you can also thrive with creating your own internship!

Make the most of it, show up on time and make sure you are respectful of the people that are helping you. I had some interns at my position after I was a student that were not the best at being on time or understanding that it was more work for us to have interns than not to have them.

It's really helpful to learn more about the community

Internships should help more with post graduate experience to obtain a job in the osych field.

The internship was wonderful and I received significant guidance from Professor Duff regarding doing an internship that I was interested in.

Use it as an opportunity to get to know all that you can about the field and network with people you might not have had the opportunity to do so with normally.

Great experience and extremely beneficial. My suggestion to all students in the program is to take it seriously because it will help you after you graduate as well.

My internship was pretty fun and was very laid back in structure. I liked it for that aspect, but I think something a tad more structured wouldn't hurt!

**This is what the alumni thought about working with community partners during their time at UMM.**

I enjoyed it. It's a great way to build meaningful working relationships for the future.

I thought it was a good way to learn about community resources and gave a better idea about employment options for the area.

Found it a great tool for learning about available resources in the community

Working with community partners was a great learning experience and the university made good choices on the individuals that I was partnered with.

Helpful with employment and networking

They provided valuable insight to the course. They showed real world examples to the class.

It was harder at first, just not knowing what to expect, but a crucial part of the process.

Those connections became vital to my success, after graduation.

I really wish there had been more integration with the community. There was a lot in each course but I feel there could be more projects.

It's helpful

Wonderful experience

It was great

Working with community partners on a frequent basis while at UMM has helped me immensely with my career and helped me to build needed confidence in regards to collaboration with community partners. It's also due to my involvement with community partners that I gained contacts that connected me with the position I have now.

It was a natural continuation of my extensive volunteer work, I think it is very valuable

It was valuable experience and a great way to apply what we learned in class.

I was able to connect with different levels of community members.

It was helpful and added more substance to the class. Working with community partners can show you how the information you are learning in your textbooks and from your professors is applicable in life.

It's a great opportunity for students to develop connections in Washington County.

I found it enjoyable and very beneficial

I enjoyed it! It felt good to give back within the community you were a part of.

They were great to work with

**What feedback do you have about working with community partners that would be helpful to the program?**

Stressing the importance of communication between students and community partners as well as professionalism.

Getting more involved with community partners reaching out to those whom may not know what UMM can do for them and how working together can benefit the community

Learning how to collaborate with community partners was very beneficial for coming into graduate school with an understanding of how to work in groups, and also teaching responsibility and accountability.

A rewarding experience

Ask questions. These people are a wealth of applied knowledge and best practices of there respective fields.

I went and found community partners, but I think now, folks might benefit from some guidance. Both the community partners as well as the students.

The community partners were so much help.

Please see above! By the way the next question needs to be more. I spent 2 years on campus and the rest off!

Remember that you may be working for or with any of these partners later in your professional career.

The more community partner involvement the better for students and the community. Especially students planning to stay in Washington County.

It would be helpful to have it be more organized with regard to documented experience that can be used on a resume

Try to work more community projects into the curriculum. They do not have to be large, difficult projects, but something to get the students and the community working together.

Be open to other people's ideas.

Keep connecting students with community partners in the future.

I found it to be extremely helpful and beneficial. It also provides students with valuable connections and social skills for after they graduate



Networking is really helpful. Getting to know people within your community brings you not only closer together, but also can help you make connections that you may not have made before.

Many who are willing to participate

**Alumni who went to graduate school said what their program of study was.**

Masters in Social Work

LCPC

Early Childhood Education

Leadership studies

Social Work

Organizational Leadership

Master's in Business Administration

Master of counseling

Master of Science in Accounting with a concentration in Taxation Law

Masters in Social Work

M.S. in School Counseling

Occupational therapy

**What field do you currently work in?**

Education / Counseling

Social Service agency

Social Work

Mental Health

Mental health

Work readiness instructor at Fedcap.

I am an early childhood consultant for the University of Maine System.

Education/human services

Quality management specialist

business counseling

Healthcare / Business

Student

Business

Workforce Development

Social Work - Developmental Services Case Management

Administrative

Healthcare

Mother and graduate student

Business communication

Service Industry

Special education teacher

**What skills do you feel you developed from the program that have been beneficial to your life/job?**

Active listening from Intro to Counseling and case manager skills.

Communication, asking questions clearly and effectively, finding resources.

Taking counseling courses helped me build interpersonal communication skills that have been extremely beneficial when working with children and families. I also learned skills of building rapport quickly, showing empathy, and having an appropriate sense of humor that can fluctuate based on the client's individual personalities. Having taken the Research Methods and Design

course prepared me for the Internal Review Board (IRB) process, which I am currently going through again in my graduate education.

foundational knowledge about how humans develop, grow, and learn and what and how things impact that development. I learned foundational theories that I now apply to my work in education.

A deep understanding of poverty

Clinical skills, documentation, ability to remain organized!

Understanding how people behave and some of the reasons that they do things.

None

Ability to communicate professionally with community partners and other professionals. Laying of the building blocks to advocate for myself in the workplace effectively.

Motivational interviewing, Cultural relevancy, person centered thinking  
interpersonal skills and working in groups

Never judge a person by their appearance. Always be open for new ideas.

Communication, empathy for others, presentations, writing skills, and I am sure there are many more but those stand out the most at the moment.

I feel that this program has made me more open to develop relationships with people, it has made it a lot easier to Express myself and understand others.

How to communicate with others based on different situations. How to work with others on the community in various places

Learning how to observe, connect, and communicate effectively with others.

**If you could go back in time, knowing what you know now, what advice would you give to yourself as a student?**

Step out of your comfort zone as much as possible —you'll never regret it.

Utilize Career services earlier and often.

Really learn about all the resources and participate more in campus activities

Some advice I would give myself would be to do more research and ask professors questions about more concise, clinical writing styles. If students in the PCS program will be applying for graduate school, it is worth having conversations with teachers about clinical writing and also basing the majority of your research on empirical literature.

I would say to go to college earlier.

Even if a Prof tells you it's no big deal, get a handle on APA and use it. It will make your life so much easier later on.

Start in the PCS program.

Be a better student and soak up all the information the professors can offer while you have them at your finger tips!

Time management is key with everything. Also, I'd tell myself that you don't have to have a specific job in mind that you want when you graduate. Enjoy figuring it out through the classes you take.

Work harder! And do more volunteer activities in the community and more engaged into school activities.

Look at the Labor Market Information for the area and see what's typical of pay for the field.

Research the jobs available in your community before graduating.

Take advantage of the opportunities presented to you as undergraduates and try to get as much experience in during this time as possible.

To participate more in class. I feel that for most topics discussed in class I had alot to say but I didn't. Specially my first few years in school.

Not everything happens as you plan it but everything happens for a reason.

Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone; put yourself out there!

I would have gone back a long time ago

**Participants were asked why they would or would not recommend the PCS courses to somebody interested in their field of work, here are the responses we received.**

All of the skills I learned in my classes I use everyday at my job.

UMM really focuses on the person and community and each area of this wide field. The professors bring a unique perspective across the board on this field which allows you the student to experience many opinions and ideas.

When I came into graduate school, I felt as though I was ahead of my class because many of them had never taken a counseling course and did not have any experience interacting with individuals in the role of a therapist, counselor, social worker, etc. Having these skills under my belt when I came into the MSW program allowed for a smooth transition from undergraduate to graduate level communication skills in class, work and field practicum.

UMaine Augusta has more variety in classes, too much favoritism with professors toward individual students, inexperience and unprofessionalism with professors, inability to engage in a professional manner and teach to the non traditional student

PCS opens a variety of doors.

I do regularly. It was a wonderful program and of great value to me. It has helped shape my career. I graduate with a M.S.Ed in May and am on to a doctoral degree in Education and Public Policy, all of which this program helped me build the capacity for.

The courses, environment, and professors helped shape and get me ready for clinical work.

I am not currently in a field that a PCS degree is needed but my previous position was and I feel that what I learned on the job there was helpful in my current position. I did case management before and I feel that what I do now is like case management for businesses. I also feel that as an older student that had owned my own business was helpful in my current position.

The classes that I took with the PCS program have been beneficial in my work so I think that someone else could benefit as well. The courses taught me a lot about people in general and different types of people. They taught me how to work with these people. Working in the healthcare field it has been very beneficial.

Completing the coursework for PCS has given me skills and abilities that I wouldn't have gotten in any other program. The PCS program was instrumental in me looking inward at who I am, my interests, and understanding the workings of my brain. It was necessary in guiding me to blooming as an adult in the professional and personal sense.

The course of study was completely relevant

The courses were fascinating and informative, even if you don't end up wanting to matriculate into the program. They are definitely worth a look-see.

Working towards a school counseling degree and so far everything has been a refresher from counseling techniques, to development, to APA style with research.

I found the PCS courses all to be very interesting and beneficial. I talk about or use something I learned in at least one class I took while in the program, on a daily basis.

Learning how to interact and communicate effectively is super helpful to learn, no matter what field you go into.

**Taking into consideration how you've used your degree after graduation, how do you think we can improve the PCS program/courses?**

Coordinating online courses to have more availability — more times and more frequently.

I think it would good if there was a way to let people know what they are qualified to do with their degree other than become a counselor. I feel people don't know what their options are.

Continue to grow the community inclusion into the program

As previously stated, having students use more clinical writing and basing research findings on empirical literature. Also, teaching students how to format their papers in APA 6th edition will give them a boost if they decide to further their education.

I think there has to be a foundational core class that focuses on writing in an APA style, and students hounded on throughout the program. This is a skill they need.

A clearer understanding of the CURRENT mental health choices and options in the community, including what Mainecare will pay for.

I am not even sure, the program improves constantly and the professors in the program are great!

More focus on actually working with clients in the social services field.

I think an option to combine business into the program, however that may work, could be beneficial.

If there is an graduate program of PCS in UMM I would like to stay

More relevant coursework for employment and having an understanding how much you could make with this degree which is around \$12 per hour which in most cases you do not need a B.A.

Utilization of Career Services a little more to get students familiar with Labor Market

Information for their areas and the businesses hiring.

Make it easier to obtain MHRT cert at graduation utilizing available elective classes

Continue to be a B.A. program! This aspect gives students of the program a huge leg up in graduate programs as most students from other universities get a B.S. with a lot more theory and a little less application.

Go more in depth about case management.

Haven't used it yet

Incorporate more state-wide internships for students during the summer or students that attend classes fully/mostly online.

**Do you have any other comments/suggestions for us?**

I found my experience very rewarding and the encouragement I received from all my professors to be why today I feel I am a successful part of the field today

UMM has a wonderful PCS program that teaches students many of the skills that they will need to utilize in their work and/or graduate school program.

Keep an open mind to all opinions. Try to understand what others are going through.

This program changed my life. It gave me focus and honed my values and focus.

Keep up the great work!

No